

THE

NATIONAL

ARCHIVES

Empire Windrush: Early Black Presence

What do the sources reveal about an early Black presence in Britain?

Key Stage 2 | Resource Pack

Time periods covered:

- Medieval (974 - 1485)
- Early Modern (1485 - 1750)
- Empire and Industry (1750 - 1850)
- Victorians (1850 - 1901)



Teacher's Notes

To encourage pupils to use original sources to find out about early Black presence in Britain. It is important that teachers ensure that pupils understand these terms: merchant, British Citizen, Commonwealth, immigrant.

These documents cover sensitive subjects and may include language and concepts that are entirely unacceptable and inappropriate today. We suggest that teachers look at the material carefully before introducing to pupils. It would be helpful to discuss the language and ideas contained in a source beforehand.

All sources could be shown on a whiteboard/ or as a printed copy. It is suggested that teachers read text-based sources together with the pupils. They may wish to break the documents into smaller extracts if they appear too long or create additional simplified transcripts. All documents include transcripts with information in square brackets to help. Teachers may wish to divide their class into small groups/pairs. Print the questions on separate cards. Ask the pupils to discuss their answers and report back to the class using the whiteboard to display the source.

Suitable for:

KS2

Time period:

- Medieval (974 - 1485)
- Early Modern (1485 - 1750)
- Empire and Industry (1750 - 1850)
- Victorians (1850 - 1901)

Connections to the Curriculum:

Events beyond living memory that are significant nationally or globally.

Part 1 Starter activity:

Pupils engage with the starter source, an image taken from the Domesday Abbreviato, with prompt questions for discussion. This source is taken from the Domesday Abbreviato, created in the thirteenth century and reveals that at this early time, there were already Black people living in England. The Black man's clothes – a short tunic over hose – suggest that he is a man of lower status, possibly a labourer.

A second source, a wage-slip for a man called John Blanke, dated 1507, expands discussion and encourages pupils to think about Black presence in Britain during medieval times. It has been taken from the records of the Treasurer of the Chamber John Blanke was a trumpeter who played in the royal courts of both Henry VII and Henry VIII.

'Blacke' is being used to describe the colour of his skin. Blanke would not have been the only Black man living in Tudor England. Countries such as Spain and Portugal would have had more contact with Africa at this time through trade. From these countries, Black people would have then made their journey across to Britain.

Give pupils a copy of John Blanke's wage-slip, with the transcript printed on the back. Ask them to focus on the image of the original source and spend 1 minute looking at the document, but not reading it closely. They can then answer the first set of questions. Once they've looked at the transcript, pupils can answer the follow-up questions.

Teacher's Notes

Part 2: Source exploration

Building on this approach, pupils study three further sources which reveal the presence of Black people in Britain. The first source is an extract from the Customs Accounts from the Port of London dated 1380-81. It shows the names of different ships travelling in and out of the port, along with the individual merchants whose goods were onboard. The amount of customs tax (money paid to the Exchequer) varied depending on whether you were an English or a Foreign merchant. Ind next to merchants' names stood for 'indigenous' and meant that they were English. Al was short for the term 'alien' and meant that these merchants were foreign.

Once the pupils have looked at the document for a few minutes, draw their attention to the merchant listed as Afrikanno Petro or African Peter and ask the follow-on question. We don't know whether the name African Peter was his real name or one used to describe how he looked. We also don't know whether Peter really was from Africa.

Introduce the second source, a letter from Queen Elizabeth I, sent to mayors and sheriffs of the country, dated 1596 as a 'Mystery Document' to the class. Ask the pupils to examine the document as an object, they do not need to read it at first. Then ask the suggested questions.

The document is about the treatment of 'Blackamoors' in England at this time. The term 'Blackamoor' was a word used to describe any person who was Black and probably Muslim. It is not an acceptable or appropriate word to use today. The letter reveals that there was a Black presence in Elizabethan times. In Tudor times, Black people came to England through slavery, as servants, or as sailors. There were also Black musicians at Queen Elizabeth's court and some Black people were also free.

Introduce the third source, the naturalisation papers for Sarah Parker Remond, a free-born African American. Sarah was applying to become a British Citizen; she wanted to legally change her nationality. She was a Suffragist, anti-slavery activist and a physician, who campaigned against slavery in Britain and studied at Bedford College. Sarah went on to train as a nurse in 1865 at London University College. She gained British Citizenship and later moved to Florence to qualify as an obstetrician.

Part 3: Three suggested creative activities:

1. Design an illustrated class timeline, reflecting Black presence in Britain through time.
2. Work in pairs/small groups to research and design a poster on a famous Black Britain.
3. Ask pupils to create a short presentation about one of the documents they've looked at in this resource, to share knowledge about the history of Black presence in Britain with another class.

Teachers may prefer to use any of the original sources here to create their own resources and activities or adapt the activities provided here for use in their schemes of work.

Introduction

Black people have lived in Britain for over two thousand years. Some came to Britain with the Roman invasion in 43 AD and they became an important part of British society throughout the medieval ages and beyond. Evidence shows that Black people joined the armed forces, married in parish churches, made significant contributions to art and writing, and resisted and challenged the repressive laws of the day. We cannot tell the history of Britain without including their stories.

In the early years of the First World War, many Caribbean men bought tickets to sail to Britain to join the army. The British West Indies Regiment was created, playing an important role in the conflict. Men from Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and other parts of Africa, also fought for Britain. At the end of the war, many African and Caribbean soldiers decided to stay in Britain to make it their permanent home. Race riots broke out in parts of the country during the early months of 1919, as some white communities blamed black people for the shortage of work and housing caused by the war.

During the Second World War, black people from across the Commonwealth fought for Britain once more. Some were soldiers, whilst others came to support work on the Homefront such as factory production and nursing.

After the war, Britain needed to be re-built. By 1948, the Nationality Act was passed; allowing people from British colonies the right to live and work in Britain if they wanted. Other people from Europe were also invited to Britain. Many people from the Caribbean left their homes to begin a new life in Britain, bringing with them a wide range of skills. They filled jobs in the transport system, postal service and health service, helping Britain to re-build and recover.

These people are often called the 'Windrush Generation', named after the ship 'The Empire Windrush' that docked at Tilbury in June 1948. Windrush was not the first ship to bring Caribbean migrants to Britain; the Ormonde and Almanzora had arrived in Southampton the year before.

Between 1947 and 1970, nearly half a million people left their homes in the Caribbean to live in Britain.

Tasks

Part 1

Starter Source 1: Domesday Abbreviato, catalogue ref: E36/284 f.19

Black figure on illuminated initial from Abbreviato of The Domesday Book. This document was made in the thirteenth century, to help officials of the King's Exchequer when consulting the original Domesday Book.

Discuss the following questions:

- Describe what can you see in this source.
- When do you think it was made? Why do you think this?
- Who do you think the man is?
- How is he dressed?
- Do you think he is important? Why/ why not?
- Why might the person who created this source, have drawn a Black man on this page? What can it tell us about the people living in Britain at this time?

Starter Source 2: John Blanke's wage slip, catalogue ref: E 36/214 f.109

Discuss the following questions:

- What can you see?
- Do you think this is a modern document? Why/ why not?
- Can you make out any of the words?
- Who is John Blanke and what is his job?
- How much is he paid?
- Why do you think he has been described as 'John Blanke the blacke'?

Follow-on questions:

- John Blanke played at the royal court; what does this tell us about his ability as a musician?
- Why do you think reference has been made to the colour of Blanke's skin?

Part 2

What do these 3 documents reveal about the early presence of Black people in Britain?

Source 1: Extract from the Customs Accounts, Catalogue Ref: E 122/71/4.

Discuss the following questions:

- What can you see in this source? Look at the layout (how the information is set out on the page) and pick out things that you notice. Based on your observations, what type of source do you think it might be?
- Can you read any of the words?

Follow-on questions:

- What does his name tell us about Peter's appearance and where he might be from?
- What does the presence of African Peter's name tell us about black presence in England during this time?

Tasks

Source 2. Letter from Elizabeth I to the mayors and sheriffs of the country, Catalogue reference: PC 2/21 f.304

Before you share this source with pupils, please be aware that it uses language that is inappropriate and unacceptable today.

- Look at the document. What can you see?
- How was it produced? (Is it typed or handwritten?)
- How is the text set out on the page? (E.g. does it use columns, paragraphs, sub-headings etc.?)
- What does this tell us about the type of document this is?
- When do you think it was written? Why do you think this?
- What words can you spot? You could display a list of words taken from the transcript for pupils to try to find.
- Do you have any idea what the document might be about?

Source 3. Naturalisation papers of Sarah Parker Redmond, Catalogue reference: HO 1/123/4809

- Where does Sarah come from in the United States of America?
- Where is Sarah currently living and how long has she lived there?
- Why does Sarah want to become a British Citizen?
- Is there any other information that you can find out about Sarah from her naturalisation papers?

Plenary

Discussion time

Think again about all the sources you've looked at in parts 1 & 2, and answer the following question:

- What do the sources reveal about the history of Black people living in Britain? Think about when they came to Britain; how they were treated; and the contribution that they've made.

Creative Activities

1. Illustrated timeline

Design an illustrated class timeline, reflecting Black presence in Britain through time. You could include information about key individuals covered in this resource or/ and encourage pupils to carry out further research. Teachers could also refer to Miranda Kaufman's book *Black Tudors: The Untold Story*.

Tasks

2. Poster

Pupils can work in pairs/small groups to research and design their own poster about a famous Black Britain of their choice. This could be an historical figure of someone contemporary.

3. Presentation

Ask pupils to create a short presentation about one of the documents they've looked at in this resource, to share knowledge about the history of Black presence in Britain with another class.

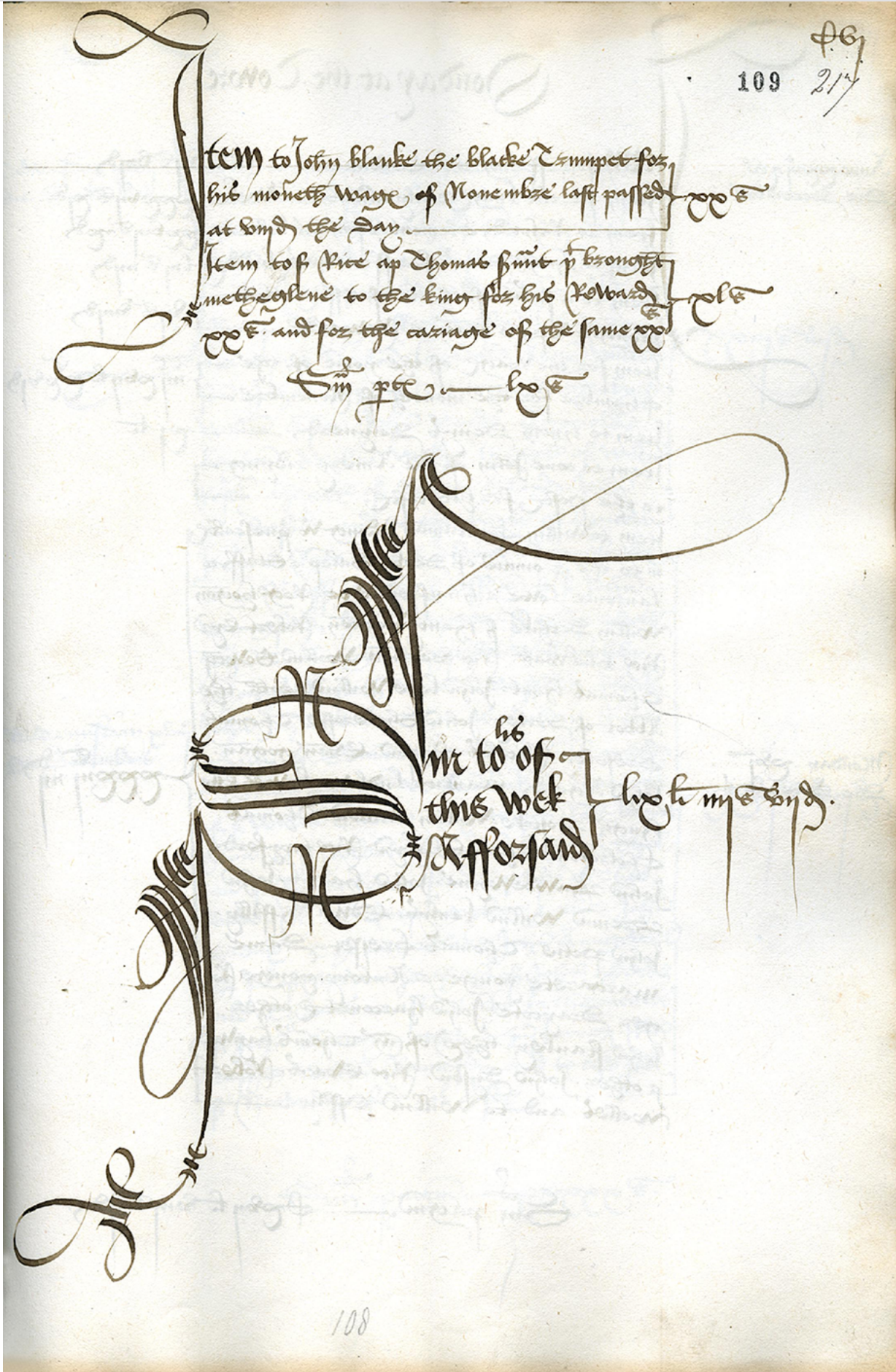
Starter Source 1: Domesday Abbreviato

Catalogue Ref: E36/284 f.19



Starter Source 2: John Blanke's wage slip

Catalogue Ref: E36/214 f.109



Transcript: Starter Source 2: John Blanke's wage slip

Item to John blanke the blacke Trumpet for his moneth wages of Novembre last passed at viij d the day - xx s. [20 shillings]

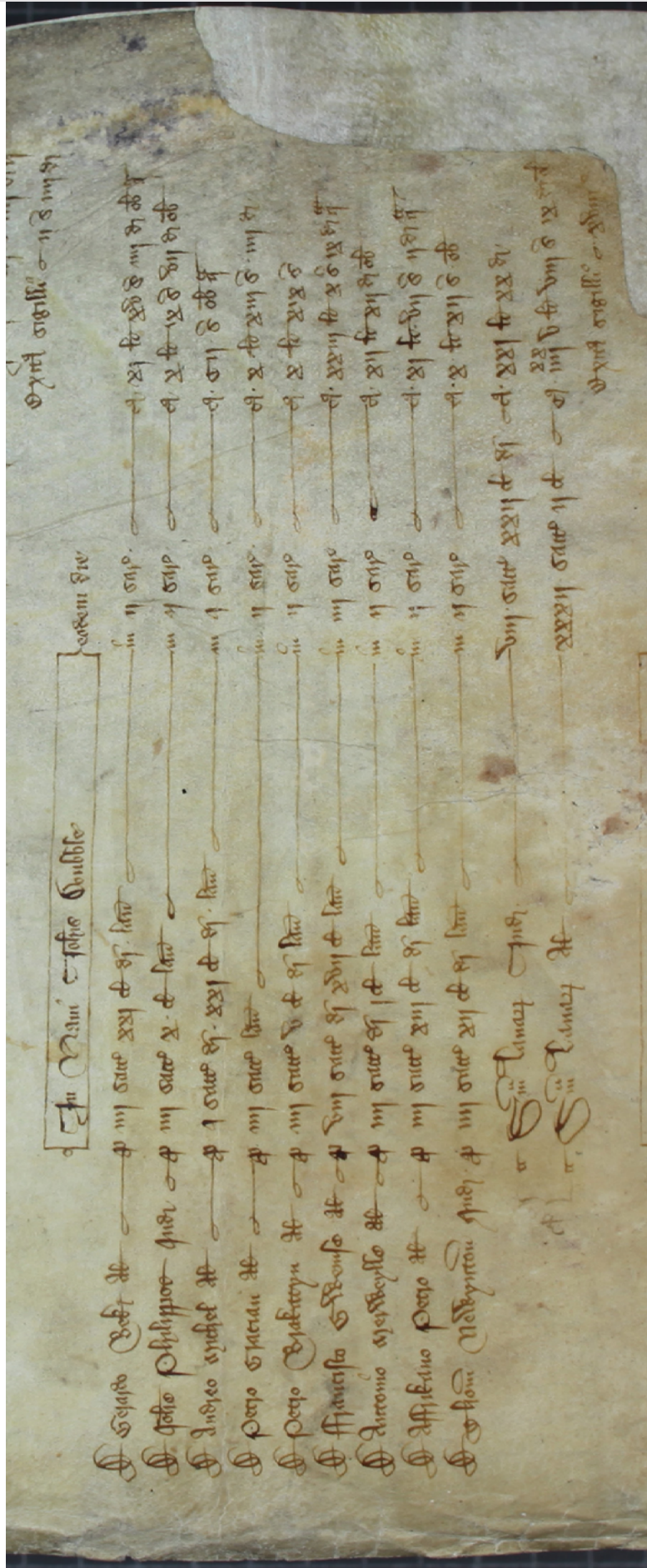
Item to Sir Rice ap Thomas' servant that brought metheglee to the king for his reward xx s [20 shillings] and for the cariage of the same xx s [20 shillings] - xls [40 shillings]

Summa parles lx s. [60 shillings]

S[u]m totals of this wek aforesaid Lix li iiijs vijd [£59, 4 shillings, 7 pence]

Source 1: Extract from the Customs Accounts

Catalogue Ref: E122/71/4



Transcript: Source 1: Extract from the Customs Accounts

London

Particulars of the account of Nicholas Brembre and John Philippot, knights, collectors of the customs and king's subsidy on wool, skins and woolfells in the port of London, that is to say the issues of the same custom and royal subsidy there from the feast of St Michael in the fourth year [of the king's reign] until the feast of St Michael next following, by the view and testimony of Geoffrey Chaucer, controller of the same custom and royal subsidy there ...

In the ship of John Double, the same day¹ [18 November 1380]

- From Gerard Bek, alien, for 4 sacks [and] 2 ½ nails² of wool, in 2 wrappers – Customs [due] £11, 15 shillings, 4 ¾ pence
- From John Philipot, native, for 4 sacks [and] 10 nails of wool, in 2 wrappers – Customs [due] £10, 9 shillings, 7 ½ pence
- From Andrea Michel, alien, for 1 ½ sacks [and] 21 ½ nails of wool, in 1 wrapper – Customs [due] 102 shillings, ¾ pence
- From Peter Gracian, alien, for 4 sacks of wool in 2 wrappers – Customs [due] £10, 13 shillings, 4 pence
- From Peter Brakatyn, alien, for 4 sacks [and] 5 ½ nails of wool in 2 wrappers – Customs [due] £10, 19s
- From Francesco Gwenise, alien, for 8 ½ sacks [and] 17 nails of wool, in 4 wrappers – Customs [due] £23 10 shillings, 9 ¼ pence
- From Antonio Merweylle, alien, for 4 ½ sacks [and] one nail of wool, in 2 wrappers – Customs [due] £12, 12 ½ pence
- From African Peter [Affrikano Petro], alien, for 4 sacks [and] 13 ½ nails of wool, in 2 wrappers – Customs [due] £11, 7 shillings, 2 ¼ pence
- From Thomas Newynton, native, for 4 sacks [and] 12 ½ nails of wool in 2 wrappers – Customs [due] £10, 12 shillings ½ pence

Sum of native wool 8 sacks, 22 ½ nails - £21, 20 pence

Sum of alien wool 32 sacks, 2 nails - £85, 8 shillings, 9 ½ pence

Issue of the seal 18 pence

¹ As the preceding entry

² A unit of measuring the weight of wool

Notes:

'African Peter' appears in the customs records on eighteen occasions this financial year alone, across eleven days in total. There were a total of 184 ships recorded in the account this year, many of which record the same merchants and their goods. It is impossible to know whether the merchants themselves were present on each occasion, or just their goods, although the names would certainly have been familiar to those working in the customs house.

Source 2: Letter from Elizabeth I to the mayors and sheriffs

Catalogue Ref: PC2/21 f.304

In every Lande to you I: Maier of Lumbey and Gallenmire the best in
 And to all other Maier of Giorke of the Seaer Maier multestant
 the best of late Ivers Blacke soores brought into the
 Gallenmire of the fildes of people there are all ready gone to minne
 roughlyinge for the God that bless the Land and of great number
 of people of a strange Nation as well comen in the world,
 as for minne for count of Exeter and unlasse to the King on work
 full to Gdermyth and to great extremyte, by in mult elsewhere
 the same of that of the fildes of people found to part of the
 Lande. And for that cause of the King Instruction by the best
 Edward Banes to take of the of the Barke more that in the last
 boyng to the of Thomas Baskerville, was brought into the
 Gallenmire the more of the King, to be transported by King out of the
 Gallenmire. Refusing to the King to be anything of the King but King
 as the Gallenmire away, and the King not to fail.

Transcript: Source 2: Letter from Elizabeth I

Modernised Transcript

An open letter to the Lord Mayor of London and the aldermen his brethren. And to all other Mayors, Sheriffs etc. Her Majesty understanding that there are of late divers Blackmoores brought into the Realm, of which kind of people there are already here too many, considering how God hath blessed this land with great increase of people of our own Nation as any country in the world. Whereof many for want of service and means to set them on work fall to idleness and to great extremity. Her Majesty's pleasure therefore is that those kind of people should be sent forth of the land. And for that purpose there is direction given to this bearer Edward Banes to take those Blackmoores that in this last voyage under Sir Thomas Baskerville were brought into this realm to the number of ten, to be transported by him out of the Realm. Wherein we require you to be aiding and assisting unto him as he shall have occasion and thereof not to fail.

Simplified transcript

To the Lord Mayor of London and his officers and all other mayors and sheriffs in the country. Her Majesty, is aware that a lot of blackmoors have been brought to this country at a time when our own population is growing. Many of them need work but without it, turn to idleness and poverty. It is her Majesty's wish that these kind of people should be sent [deported] out of the country. Edward Banes is to transport out of the country 10 Blackmoors brought into the country by Sir Thomas Baskerville. Everyone is to help him ensure that this happens.

Source 3: Naturalisation papers of Sarah Parker Redmond

Catalogue Ref: HO 1/123/4809

A

To the Right Honorable Sir George
 Grey Baronet Her Majesty's Principal Secretary
 of State for the Home Department -

The Memorial of Sarah
 Parker Redmond of Aubrey
 House Notting Hill in the County of
 Middlesex -

Sheweth

That your Memorialist is desirous of
 obtaining for herself a Certificate of or
 Naturalization pursuant to the Act of or
 Parliament passed in the eighth year of the
 Reign of Her present Majesty entitled "An Act
 to amend the Law relating to Aliens"

That your Memorialist is of African descent
 and a native of Salem, Massachusetts in the
 United States of America -

That your Memorialist is forty-one years
 of age and is unmarried -

That your Memorialist's settled place of
 residence is in London -

That your Memorialist has resided or
 uninterruptedly in this Country for the last six
 years and upwards and it is her intention to
 continue to reside permanently within the United
 Kingdom -

That the grounds upon which your or
 Memorialist seeks to obtain the rights and or
 capacities of a natural born British subject are as
 follows; She has to all intents and purposes adopted
 England as her Country and is desirous of being able
 to obtain and hold real or leasehold property in this
 Country where many of her most intimate friends reside.
 The strong prejudice against persons of African or
 descent which is entertained by a large proportion of
 the Inhabitants of the United States and the social
 disabilities under which such persons consequently
 suffer have determined your Memorialist under no
 circumstances to return to reside in America.

Your Memorialist therefore humbly
 prays that a Certificate of
 Naturalization may be granted to her

Sarah P Redmond

Transcript: Source 3: Naturalisation papers of Sarah Parker Redmond

To the Right Honourable Sir George Grey, Baronet, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The Memorial [application] of Sarah Parker Remond of Aubrey House, Notting Hill in the County of Middlesex.

Sheweth [Shows]

That your Memorialist [applicant] is desirous [wishes] of obtaining for herself a Certificate of Naturalisation pursuant [following] to the Act of Parliament passed in the eighth year of the Reign of Her present Majesty entitled "Act to amend the Law relating to Aliens" [citizens of a foreign countries]

That your memorialist is of African descent and a native of Salem, Massachusetts in the United States of America.

That your Memorialist is forty-one years of age and is unmarried.

That your Memorialist's settled place of residence is in London.

That your Memorialist has resided uninterruptedly in the Country for the last six years and upwards and it is her intention to continue to reside permanently within the United Kingdom.

That the Grounds upon which your Memorialist seeks to obtain the rights and capacities of a natural born British subject are as follows: She has to all intents and purposes adopted England as her Country and is desirous of being able to obtain and hold real or leasehold property in this Country where many of her most intimate friends reside. The strong prejudice against persons of African descent which is entertained by a large proportion of the Inhabitants of the United States and the social disabilities under which such persons consequently suffer have determined your Memorialist under no circumstances to return to reside in America.

Your Memorialist therefore humbly prays that a Certificate of Naturalisation may be granted to her.

Sarah P. Redmond



Why do our hyperlinks come with footnotes?

Our resources are designed to be printed and used in classrooms, which means hyperlinks aren't always accessible digitally. We include the full link at the bottom of the page so that you can type in the address without distracting from the main text of the lesson materials.

Did you know?

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Our [Onsite Workshops](#) are available for free here at The National Archives and allow students to experience genuine original documents reflecting over 1000 years of history. From Elizabeth I's signature to the telegrams of the sinking Titanic, students love the wow-factor of being able to see real history on the desk in front of them.

Our [Online Workshops](#) allow our Education Officers to teach through your projector, leading discussions and guiding students through activities based around original documents. All you need is a computer with a projector, webcam and microphone. We'll arrange a test call before your session to check the tech is working.

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